1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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examine the Murngin kinship behavior centered around sisters and daughters.

Fathers and brothers treat a daughter and sister alike in that (1) they decide to which of her dués she will belong; (2) they stand responsible for her loss by runaway marriage, et cetera; (3) they beat her for misconduct; (4) they supply another daughter and sister to her dué if she dies or is sterile; and (5) they come to her assistance if she is excessively mistreated by dué.

The above largely summarizes a father's behavior toward a daughter, but gives only a part of a brother's relationship with his sister.

Except for the fifth case, the father and brother, so far as they obey tribal law, do all they can to force the daughter and sister into a permanent marriage and to censor the dué-galle relationship. The necessity of keeping a woman with her husband to protect the kinship structure of Murngin society is thus clearly felt by all people, including the members of her own family and clan, whose structures have been damaged by her going to a new family and clan.

The fifth element of behavior indicates a possibility of strife. No brother or father would interfere with a husband chastising his wife; indeed, they would help him. But if the wife were being brutally treated, or were killed for no just cause, they would interfere, which would usually mean a fight. Such an assumption of responsibility for the sister's and daughter's rights shows that she is still considered a part of her kinsmen's clan and family. It is only under the most extreme provocation that members of a woman's clan would act; no instance was recorded by the author. In case of a husband's brutality, his own clansmen apply pressure to prevent trouble with her clan, and also because of a feeling that such conduct is wrong.

If a brother killed his sister, no direct action would be taken by the clan, clan solidarity preventing it. This contrasts with the feeling of her own clan if her husband should kill her. It demonstrates that fundamentally she is considered as belonging to her own group, not to her husband's, even after she has been taken by the latter's clan.

Yet a brother calls his sister "wakinu," i.e., without relatives; and if her husband or anyone else swears at her in her brother's presence the latter throws spears at her and at all his other sisters, even though they are not involved in the quarrel. This behavior seemingly contradicts the above statement. There are several possible explanations. It might be said that he throws spears at her because he believes the swearing to be due to some fault of hers. A brief investigation proves

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765 of the man's personal basket. A piece of a spear that has been broken
628 off and left in the body of the victim is also used as a relic. When a man has been wounded he sometimes soaks pieces of paper bark in his blood and presents them to his relatives to be used as reminders of their duty to compensate him for his injury by helping him kill or wound a member of the offending man's clan. When a man obtains one of the relics, it is an almost absolute demand on him to kill a member of the slayer's group. This is particularly true if it is given to a young man. The older men usually give their relics to the younger males.

765 The spirit of the dead is supposed to go with the relic, and the relic
778 has magic power. It can be thrown into an intended victim's fire and
789 cause him to go to sleep, or the possessor can blow his breath against it and produce the same effect. It is often carried in the mouth during a battle to make an opponent tired and heavy-footed and to prevent him from dodging spears. Relics play a prominent part in all feuds.

682 Occasionally men are killed within the clan, but this is not a cause for war or retaliation by members of the clan or by near relatives from without the clan. A man may be such a notorious killer and cause so much trouble for his own clansmen that the entire group will kill him to stop further disturbances. At times men are slain by their own
688 clan for breaking ceremonial taboos, such as divulging secrets of the old men to the women or the uninitiated, and for viewing ceremonial objects before their initiation.

672 If a fight is on and a near relative is accidentally hit by a club or
576 spear, the person responsible hits himself on the head while saying he is sorry. Here, too, the underlying idea is to inflict an injury on the responsible person similar to the one the injured party suffered.

152 Military honor also contributes its share to the causes for war. A man
577 will brave the spears of a whole clan to demonstrate his fearlessness. The writer has seen two brothers defy fifteen men in a spear fight. The Murngin people are a brave and courageous group. Fear of death
[626] while in a fight is seldom seen. A man who shows an unwillingness to fight is called a woman and held in extreme contempt.

628 The fundamental principle underlying all the causes of Murngin
681 warfare is that of reciprocity: if a harm has been done to an individual
181 or a group, it is felt by the injured people that they must repay the ones who have harmed them by an injury that at least equals the one they have suffered. When the total cultural situation of Murngin life is
181 further examined, this negative reciprocation is found to fit into a

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
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Magical Beliefs

[578] 754 A profound belief in magic enters very largely into the life of these people, and is a very fruitful cause of tribal quarrels and killings. The most important of these beliefs concerns magical killings by sorcerers known as "Ragalk."

According to this belief, the Ragalk, having selected his victim, or having been commissioned by another to bring about the death of a certain individual, waits until he finds this man alone, out hunting or passing between camps, and, seizing him, soon reduces him to a condition of unconsciousness. Then, making a deep incision into the thorax, he thrusts in his hand and squeezes all the blood out of the victim's heart and other organs. The blood is caught in paper-bark baskets, and allowed to dry, and is later partaken of by the Ragalk and his companions. These are usually two or three younger men being instructed in this art of magical killing. Having secured the blood, the Ragalk, by an elaborate process, hides all traces of the operation and restores the victim to consciousness and normal life, so that he returns to camp entirely unaware of what has taken place. Before releasing him, the Ragalk determines how long the victim shall live, which may be for several weeks, and by what means he shall actually die. He may determine that the man shall die from snake-bite, or be speared, or taken by a shark or crocodile, but, whatever happens, it is the Ragalk who is really responsible for the person's death.

682 761 Among these people there is no belief in death from natural causes, so that every death is believed to be the result of evil magic, and steps are immediately taken to determine who is responsible for it. The number of men who are believed to possess this magical power is limited, so it is usually a matter of determining which one of a comparatively small number is guilty. This is done by methods which are utterly unscientific, but which are thoroughly convincing to the aboriginal mind. In this way tribal quarrels and vendettas are begun and continued, and practically every death is followed by a violent upheaval of the tribal life.

753
776 originally by the Djangauwo sisters—women culture
[773] heroes, who, in their progress across east Arnhem Land, thrust their yam sticks into the ground as they walked. From each of the holes caused in this way there gushed a spring of water of a special kind called *milmindjarrk*. Certain tabus restrict the drinking of *milmindjarrk* water and my informant Nyarrang declared that the swelling on his neck was due to ritual punishment in the form of a blow from the *malli* of the heavy *birlma*, used by the Djangauwo sisters whose spirits still preside over *milmindjarrk* waters. Some time later, the effect of the blow from the *malli birlma* had become manifest in the form of a swelling. It is characteristic of these people that when 'something is wrong,' when they receive a warning in the
[787] form of an omen or portent, or when 'bad luck' attends their hunting or fishing expeditions, they look back over their lives for some incident which has caused them
[152] uneasiness or concern and which they feel may have incurred the displeasure of the *malli wangarr*, the spirits of the ancestral culture heroes.

756 The role of the *marrngitmirri* is twofold: first, to diagnose sickness or to determine the cause of death, and secondly
[776] to find a scapegoat by the aid of his *marrngit*—who, being
[787] spirits or ghosts, possess occult powers, powers to see things not visible to mortals, which they communicate to the *marrngitmirri*, who in turn passes the information to the kin of the victim. As a rule the verdict of the *marrngitmirri*
[682 is accepted without question and the people proceed to
593] select an avenger. This will be a person within the kinship horizon of the deceased—sometimes a younger brother but often a more distant relation from a clan to which, under an extension of the kinship structure, he has special obligations, which may be reciprocal.

In the marginal area adjacent to the Burara, *i.e.* close to
[754] the territorial stronghold of the *ragalk*—the *marrngitmirri* looks at once for signs of the tell-tale magic of the dreaded *kalka*, just as a man does when seeking the reason for what he accepts as ritual punishment.

754 Even in the culturally homogeneous area of north-east
756 Arnhem Land, the beliefs and ideas about the *marrngit* and
114 *marrngitmirri*, as well as about *ragalk*, vary considerably—necessarily so, in a matter which is strongly subjective. The foregoing reference to the role of the *marrngitmirri* discounts Webb's statement (*loc. cit.*) that this man 'possesses no special influence in the life of his horde or tribe.' It must be apparent that at critical times, when the sentiments of the
[753 kin of a sick or newly deceased man are aroused as they
761] are by the pronouncements of the *marrngitmirri* (which, backed by belief in his *marrngit*, are accepted without question), his influence on the horde in which he lives is one of life and death.

The Kalka *at Work*

754 The *kalka* or sorcerer is believed to be responsible for
753 bringing about the sickness and ultimate death of his
761 victim but he does not profess to diagnose sickness or injury due to magic, which is the role only of the *marrngit*. In practice, *kalka* may operate singly but more generally they work in groups of two or three. A sorcerer is likely

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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134 humus are swept into the swamps or out to sea. The residue
132 from this fierce erosion is the typical clay, gravel, and stone of Arnhem Land. Nevertheless, with the first cloudbursts, the harassed country makes an astounding recovery. In an
137 incredibly short time a thick growth of high coarse grass
136 covers the rocky hills and sandy valleys, yams spring to life on gravel slopes, and animal and bird life is rejuvenated; red kangaroos, agile wallabies, opossums, mice, snakes, goannas, emus, jungle fowls, ducks, geese, spoonbills, herons, brolgas, and many more in kind grow fat and lazy from the
132 lavish hand of nature. But the vicious circle is not to be avoided. Winds swing back to the south-east and the nightmare of poverty again creeps over the land.

123 Exploring in the north-east brought us into contact with most of the scattered hordes so frequently referred to as the 'Killers of Arnhem Land'. In early September we were in the English Company's Islands, with the crew on the look-out for Yulengor; and when they saw a thin column of smoke on a beach, conjecture was rife as to who was in the camp. A dozen men and boys paddled out in their big dug-out canoes and came aboard somewhat diffidently. However, they were soon squatting round the hatch exchanging news with the crew, all the time passing the one
[276] and only bush pipe backwards and forwards and drawing deeply the first tobacco smoke they had tasted for months. Most of them were strong and well developed, with bushy hair, but not too clean. As a concession to the white man
[291] they had donned strips of bark on string waistbands. They were reserved, but interested in all we did, and gladly accepted a couple of tomahawks, wire for fish-spears, and fish-hooks.

628 After the visitors had cast-off in their canoes, a crew-boy
684 mentioned that our visitors had just returned from killing a
● 682 man in revenge for the death of another in the hills behind our anchorage. It was a long story of intrigue and murder,

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and on the shore after dark, the horde told me about it in their own graphic fashion. Months previously, Burramai had legally married a certain woman. But she had a grown-up daughter and the trouble started when he also took this 'step-daughter' into his camp, knowing full well that she was not of his marriage-division and that tribally she was regarded as being as much his daughter as one of his own flesh and blood.

It was not long before this scandal of incest was known to all the hordes, and Murrkundi, a close relative of the women, came down through the islands looking for Burramai, and eventually found him by his fire near Melville Bay. Murrkundi wasted no time in taking up the argument: 'How many wives do you want? Isn't it enough that you have a legal wife from your own marriage-division? Or do you want women from other men's divisions as well?' Burramai was adamant: 'Yes, I want all the women I can get. All your talk about tabus and legal marriage is rubbish. I have had my step-daughter for many moons and no harm has come to me—I'm not dead yet.'

Murrkundi seemed to give way before this blasphemous outburst, and merely asked to be taken to see the women who were also his relatives; for in Arnhem Land, nomads are tribally related over distances of several hundred miles. When they had gone some distance Murrkundi feigned thirst, so his guide took him to a pool in a mountain stream, but he held back so that Burramai might drink first. Kneeling down to drink, Burramai saw in the clear water the reflection of Murrkundi fitting a spear to his spear-thrower with the obvious intention of killing him, so without drinking he rose quickly and wiped his lips, and said: 'That is good water. It has made me strong again. You have a drink now.'

Murrkundi drank in safety, for Burramai remembered that the water carried reflections and refrained from spearing the man. But once they were out of the stream, he told

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628 689 687 Murrkundi to lead the way because he wished to go into the bushes for a few moments. Unsuspectingly Murrkundi fell into the trap, and as he passed by, Burramai drove a spear through his arm and another into his back. Mortally wounded, Murrkundi fell to the ground and asked: 'What is all this about? Why have you speared me?'

'You know well enough. This is of your own making. When I was drinking I saw your reflection in the water as you fitted your spear to kill me.'

'If you think I intended to spear you, you are wrong. I never pointed the spear at you, I merely hooked it to my spear-thrower and pointed it away into the bush.'

'Well, I'm not like you and I don't understand your actions. If I see anyone pointing a spear at me I kill him.'

And with that Burramai turned on his heel and walked off, thinking to himself: 'He's not dead yet, but by midday the sun will be hot and he will die.'

Months later Murrkundi's friends found his skeleton and [764] performed the customary ghost-laying ceremonies prior to packing the bones in bark and sending them to his horde on Elcho Island.

Burramai skilfully evaded several plots to kill him for the death of Murrkundi, until eventually a big inter-tribal gathering was held in Arnhem Bay, and was preceded by [928] the usual peace-making ceremony in which old differences are settled. Burramai was present and went through his trial-by-ordeal and made peace with the relatives of the dead Murrkundi. Normally the matter should have ended there, but an old man went to Burramai as he sat in peace with his erstwhile enemies and abruptly reopened the dispute: 'Why did you kill Murrkundi? He didn't steal your wife or abuse your totem. Why did you spear him like a dog?' Old passions were revived. One unrestrained youth said: 'Let us finish him now.' Burramai, who was exhausted from the all-day trial-by-ordeal, then made the fatal error of

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running away, and two youths chased him into the jungle. One of them threw a spear which cut off his ear, and a second went through him. The avengers shouted to the horde, and one by one the men plunged their spears into the body and left it there, exposed and deliberately mutilated.

It was after midnight when the men finished this story of stark Stone Age justice, and I left them on the beach to return to the lugger to switch on a portable radio for an assurance that this was actually the twentieth century.

The rest of the trip was boisterous, with head winds and heavy seas, till we entered Port Bradshaw and beached the boat for repairs. Long ago, Macassar traders fished here for trepang, and East Indian tamarind trees fringing the shoreline marked their camps. I came across a curious formation of stones, and could make nothing of it till months later I read in Matthew Flinders's diary that in 1803 he saw similar formations in Blue Mud Bay. He could not solve the riddle till he met the Macassars in the English Company's Islands, where Pobasso, their chief, told him that the Malays had made the stone fireplaces to boil and cure their bêche-de-mer.

Bêche-de-mer is known locally by its Macassar name of trepang. Scientifically it is termed *Echinodermata* or 'Spiny-skinned'; seven hundred species are known to exist, and the few varieties in Australia range from nine to eighteen inches in length. They are rough skinned and look like lumps of rubber or bread rolls, with ridged bands extending around the entire length. Trepanging is the oldest industry in Australia, for it seems to have been at its height soon after Captain Cook landed at Botany Bay. Malay traders gathered it for the Chinese market. It must be cured for export, and the process is much the same as that used by the Malays. It is gutted, boiled in a strong solution of mangrove bark and sea-water, smoked over a slow fire, dried in the sun, and bagged. Chinese regard it as a delicacy and

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old men often results in 'Murramburr' or marriage-by-theft, 583
for if a young man cannot obtain a wife by peaceful means he sometimes attempts to capture women. Gwaipiji wanted a wife, so he considered the daughters of his tribal mothers-in-law, but he found that they were all married to tribal husbands. Turning his attention to one of them, he decided to steal her, so he went to her husband's country and waited till the women were hunting, and then he forced the girl to go with him.

Bununggu, the girl's husband, resented the theft and told 684
his troubles to his brothers who were visiting a friendly 682
horde. He suggested that, as Gwaipiji was also friendly with them, he would eventually wander into their camp with the runaway wife, and they could then kill him and return the woman. They agreed to the proposal, so Bununggu camped with them till, in a few weeks, as he had anticipated, Gwaipiji arrived with the woman. Bununggu visited the erring couple and formally remonstrated with Gwaipiji: 'Why did you take my wife? She was never promised to you, whereas I have been paying for her for years. She is a good food-gatherer, and as I have no other wives I want her back.' But Gwaipiji also wanted the woman: 'All you say is true, but now that I have her I intend to keep her. I have no wives, all my mothers-in-law have disposed of their children, and I have no prospects of getting a wife. You, on the other hand, have three infants promised to you by the Inipi rite.'

Bununggu sat in silence as Gwaipiji thus signed his death warrant. He was not even listening, for he intended to kill Gwaipiji and recapture the woman. As the morning star rose and the camp was asleep, two youths came to Gwaipiji's fire and speared him in the back. Bununggu also blooded his spear, and in the resulting bedlam he dragged the woman to the side of his dying rival and made the customary speech over him, giving reasons for the attack, but more particularly

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684 stating his case to bystanders: 'I "pushed" these young
681 men to kill you because you took my wife; she was not promised to you, she was never yours and always belonged to me. That is why you die.'

Wife-stealing usually results in the woman being brutally beaten or speared, and whether she goes willingly with the seducer or is forcefully stolen makes no difference to her punishment. She shows no resentment, and indeed she regards lenient treatment as a slight to her charms.

848 Because of Yulengor marriage customs the question of illegitimate children does not occur. There are frequent illicit relations, but as every girl has a husband her children do not arouse comment. If an irregular union should be openly consummated, the children do not suffer permanently, for irregular births are absorbed into the horde and into relationships which they would have had if their mother had been correctly mated.

163 Women have about two children each, though some have as many as five or six and one I know has a dozen. Many children are born, but the population is not increasing, except on mission stations where medical attention is avail-
[165] able and child-welfare taught. In the bush, infant mortality is high, and long periods elapse between births. Children
862 are not weaned till they are five or six years of age, and I have seen grandmothers ten years and more after the birth of their last child successfully suckling grandchildren.

844 In child-birth Nature is allowed to take her course and no assistance is given beyond occasional pressure. If the child is born normally and quickly, it probably survives, and so
[845] does the mother, but when anything abnormal occurs there is a stillborn child and the mother is often injured in a way that prevents her from having any more children. Blood accompanying the placenta is tabu and is meticulously buried. Ordinarily the mother is walking within three or four hours of a birth, and within a day she goes hunting.